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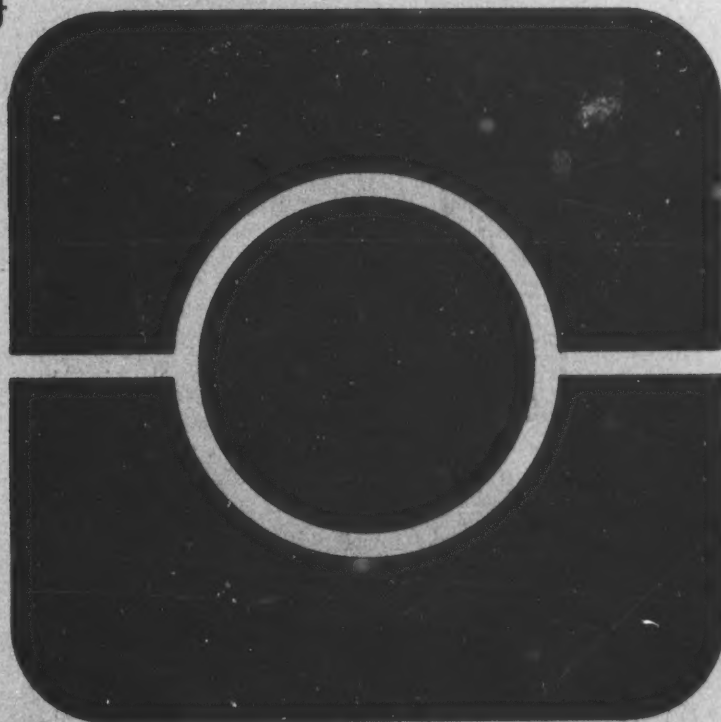
ABSTRACT

Through the centuries, the Ojibwe moved westward to Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and Manitoba, Canada. Every Ojibwe person inherited membership in a clan or totem from the father. Parents taught their children, talked with them, told them stories, corrected them, and taught them by setting good examples. Boys learned everything they needed to know as hunters and warriors. Girls learned things they needed to know when grown up. During the winter, each family group lived alone in the forest, hunting in a section where only family members were allowed. In spring, they lived in sugar bush, tapping trees for sap to make sugar. During summer, they lived together in small villages, planted gardens, visited friends, held religious and ceremonial feasts and dances, played group games, and made war on tribal enemies to avenge previous defeats and gain honors in battle. Autumn was the time for harvesting rice and gathering and storing food. Through all their seasonal tasks, the Ojibwe, a deeply religious people, remembered the Great Spirit. Their religion was mainly each one's relation with his personal guardian spirit, which they found when they learned to fast as children. (NQA)

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THE OJIBWE PEOPLE

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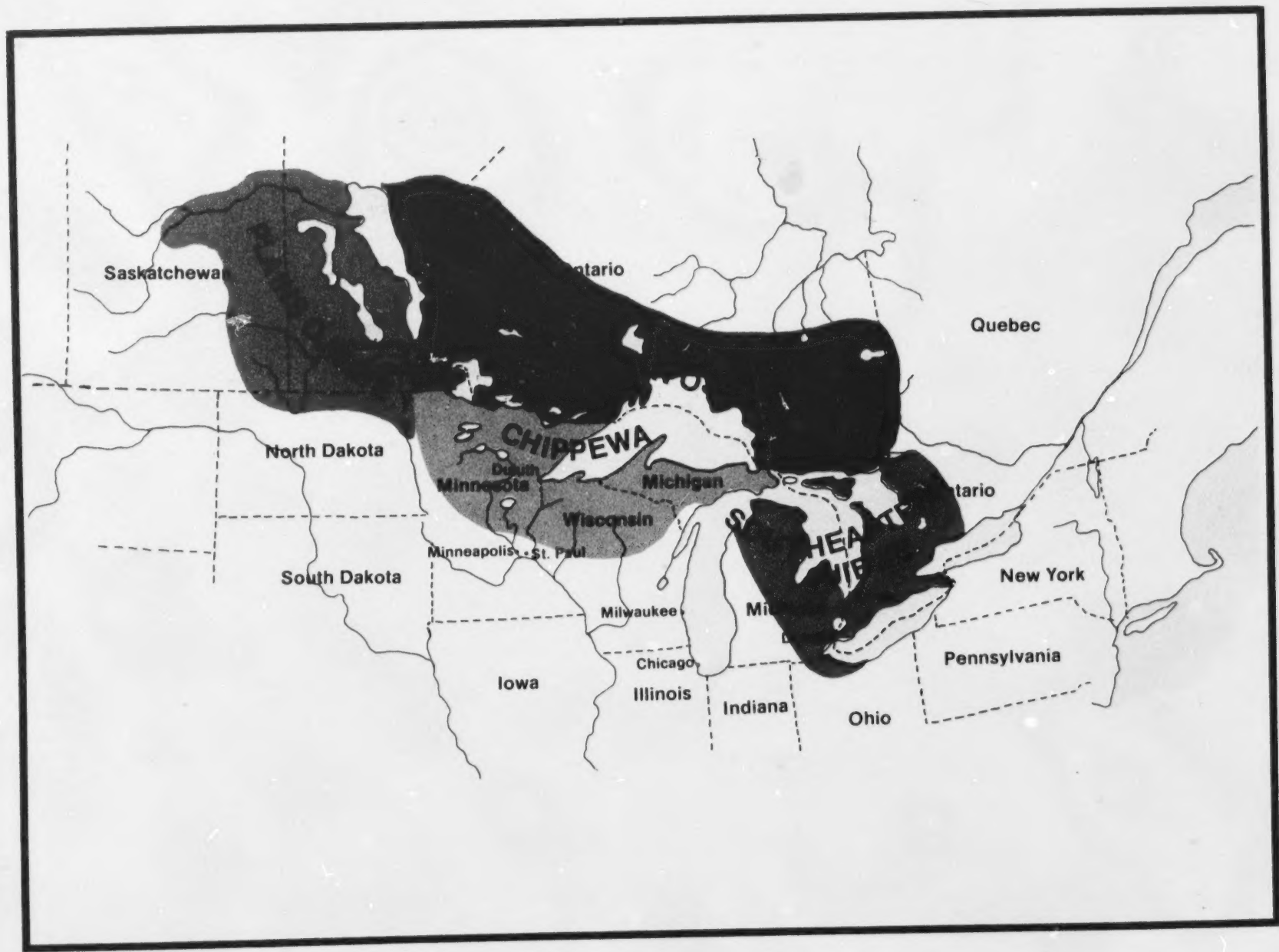
THE WESTWARD JOURNEY

According to the stories handed down through generations by the Ojibwe or Chippewa people, their home, long ago, was "on the shores of the great salt water, toward the rising sun" — that is, on the Atlantic Ocean. Through the centuries, they moved westward — up the St. Lawrence, then along the Great Lakes, finally reaching Lake Superior. About 1500, when European explorers began coming to the Atlantic coast of North America, the people of the Ojibwe nation were living north of Lake Huron and around the eastern end of Lake Superior. By the time the French fur traders and missionaries reached the land of the Ojibwe, in the 1600s, many of these woodland people had moved south of Lake Superior and into what is now Upper Michigan. Later large numbers of them moved still farther, into the forests of northern Wisconsin and Minnesota. There they forced the Dakota or Sioux people from their ancient village sites. A few Ojibwe went even farther west, out onto the plains of what are now Dakota and Manitoba, Canada. Some also moved south and east from Lake Superior into Lower Michigan and southern Ontario.

THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE

We have said that these woodland people were called both the Chippewa and the Ojibwe. Those are the names which others gave them. The word "**Ojibwe**" (which is pronounced o-JIB-way and is often spelled this way also) means "to roast until puckered." It is believed they may have been given this name because they wore moccasins with a puckered or gathered seam on the front. No other tribe had such moccasins. The word "**Chippewa**" is only a slightly different way of saying the word "**Ojibwe**," and the people were known by both names.

The Ojibwe people themselves have always used a different name. They call themselves the Anishinabe (a-NISH-in-AH-bay), a word which may be translated as "a person" or "one of the first people."



CLANS OR TOTEMS

Besides being a member of the tribe, every Ojibwe person of earlier times was also a member of a clan or totem (TOE-tem). There were 15 or 20 totems, each named after a bird, beast, or fish of the forest — such as the beaver, loon, and so forth. A person inherited his totem membership from his father, just as a person today gets his last name from his father. Clan members were closely related, and no one ever married someone of his own clan. A person belonged to the same totem all his life. Some of the Ojibwe totems were large and well known; others had few members. Everyone had relatives — people of the same totem — scattered throughout the tribe.

OJIBWE PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

When a child was born, everyone in the village rejoiced, and friends helped the parents to celebrate with a feast. An important part of the feast was a prayer asking the Gichimanido (kee-che-MUN-e-doo), or Great Spirit, to let the child live and grow up and to give him long life.

When the child was still very small, he was carefully wrapped and laid on the cradleboard, where he was held in place by broad, beautifully embroidered bands. There he spent much of every day for the first year and longer. The cradle was padded with soft, tanned hide and a pillow filled with feathers. The blanket wrapped around the little one was the finest rabbit fur. For diapers the mother used soft, dried moss, which could be changed when needed.

When in the cradleboard, the child was safe from many dangers. His mother could take him wherever she went. The child was never alone. When the cradleboard was swinging from the low bough of a tree, leaning against a stone, or carried on his mother's back, the little one could watch others at work or play.

4 When children grew to be two or three years old, they were given more freedom to run around. Both mothers and

fathers loved to play with their children, and made them many toys. Grandparents also entertained little boys and girls, talked with them and told them stories. Often they helped children to tame birds and other wild animals of the forest for pets.

Ojibwe parents spent much time teaching their children how to live and how they must act after they were grown up. Punishments were very few. If the children did not behave right, older people corrected them patiently and tried to teach them by setting them a good example.

A mother would teach her little boy or girl to share by giving the child meat in a dish and telling him to take it to a neighbor who needed food. If the father came back from a hunt bringing more meat than the family could use, the mother might send her child to the lodges of other families with the message that they should come and take what they needed. In this way also, the child learned to share.

Most of the teaching was done by parents and grandparents. The mothers and grandmothers taught the girls; fathers and grandfathers taught boys. But aunts, uncles, and other older people also helped.

Sometimes in the evening after dark, an older man of the village would walk around the camp, calling out what would be done by the band the next day. His voice could be heard in every lodge. This task was only carried out by a person who had lived a good life himself, for besides telling the news, the elder gave good advice. He warned children not to lie or steal, but to obey their parents and respect them. For grown-ups he had the advice that they should live together in peace.

Children were also taught in other ways. One old Ojibwe man, recalling his childhood, said, "When we were young, we often sat in a circle while an old person in the group talked, telling us what was ahead of us; what we should do to live good lives."



PHOTO: MHS



Another man, after he had grown old, spoke of his father: "He believed in persuasion. I know not that he ever used harsh means, but would talk to me for hours. As soon as it was dark he would call me to his side and begin to talk, and tell me that the Great Spirit would bless me with a long life if I would love my friends, and particularly the aged. He would always take me with him when he was going anywhere near, and I learned his movements, for I watched him going through the woods. Often would he tell me that when I should be a man I must do so, and so, and do as he did, while fording rivers, shooting deer, trapping beaver, and so forth. I always imitated him while I was a hunter.

"My mother was also kind and affectionate; she seemed to be happy when she saw us enjoying ourselves by her."

LEARNING HOW TO FAST

When they were still very young, Ojibwe boys and girls began a special and very important preparation for the life which lay ahead. This was learning how to fast, or to go without food for days at a time. Both boys and girls fasted, although it was looked on as more important for the boys. For his first trial, the child might miss only one meal. Sometime later, he might fast from sunrise to sunset. As the child grew older, he fasted longer. Even a fast of one day took great courage and self-control.

When a boy was 10 or 12, he would make a fast of several days — as much as five or six days. For that fast, he went out into the forest, taking only a blanket or robe to cover himself. There he stayed, neither eating nor drinking. At night he went to the top of a hill or other high place to sleep, or else made himself a "nest" of boughs in a tree. He was alone, except that his father looked after him once a day to see that he was safe. A girl who fasted was visited by her mother or grandmother. Girls never fasted as long as boys.

The purpose of the fast was to withdraw from people and talk to the spirit world. In this way the young person tried to reach or to find a spirit to guide and protect him through life. This helper was a lesser spirit, to bridge the gulf between himself and the Great Master and Creator of Life. The guardian spirit might also reveal to the young person something of his future — whether he would have a long life, whether he would become a great hunter or perhaps a medicine man. The longer he fasted, the more the boy would learn of the life that lay ahead, and the more power he would receive.

The boy's guardian spirit appeared to him in a dream or vision, usually in the form of some familiar bird or animal of the forest — perhaps a bear or an eagle.

When the boy had had a dream in which a spirit helper appeared, he returned to his waiting parents. They were anxious that he should succeed in his search for a helper.

If he fasted long, it was believed he would receive much help from his guardian spirit.

Although the child wanted to tell his parents about his dream, they urged him to keep it to himself, and might answer, "It is well, my child; say no more." They told him that his dream was sacred, his most precious possession in life. He must always keep it a secret, otherwise the spirit helper might forsake him. To honor their child and to give thanks, the parents prepared a feast to which they invited older friends and family members.

Throughout life, every Ojibwe person fasted many times and called on his spirit helper for strength or guidance — when he was sick or in danger, when his family was hungry and he could find no game, when in battle against enemies, and at other times. Often the man felt he was helped by becoming like the spirit animal in some way — as strong as the bear or as cunning as the fox.

EDUCATION FOR LIFE

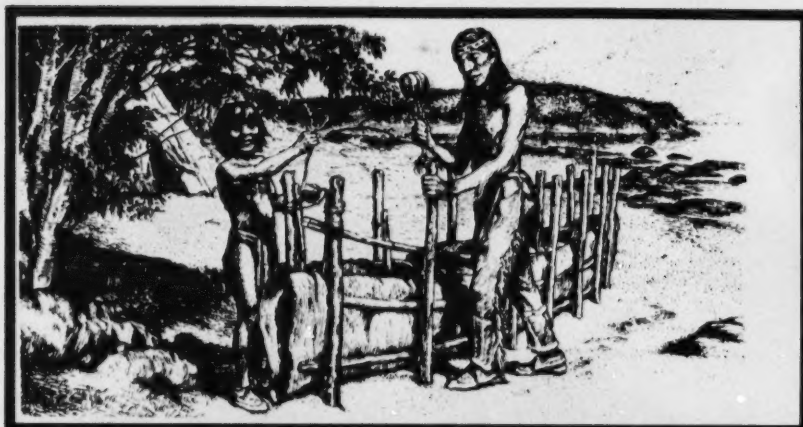
The Ojibwe were a woodland people. But this meant more than simply living in the forest. They lived *with* the forest and *with* the many other creatures who shared their forest home. They knew — what many people of today have forgotten — that man is part of nature. They were keenly aware of the forest around them, at every hour and at every season. The tiniest changes in air or sky or the faintest sound on the wind did not escape them.

They studied closely all the plants — which ones were good for food, which could cure diseases, which could be used for other purposes. They learned the habits of every bird, beast, and fish, as carefully as a scientist could.

This knowledge was not written in books, but was handed down from one generation to the next by word of mouth, and by example. Ojibwe parents and older people of the tribe had



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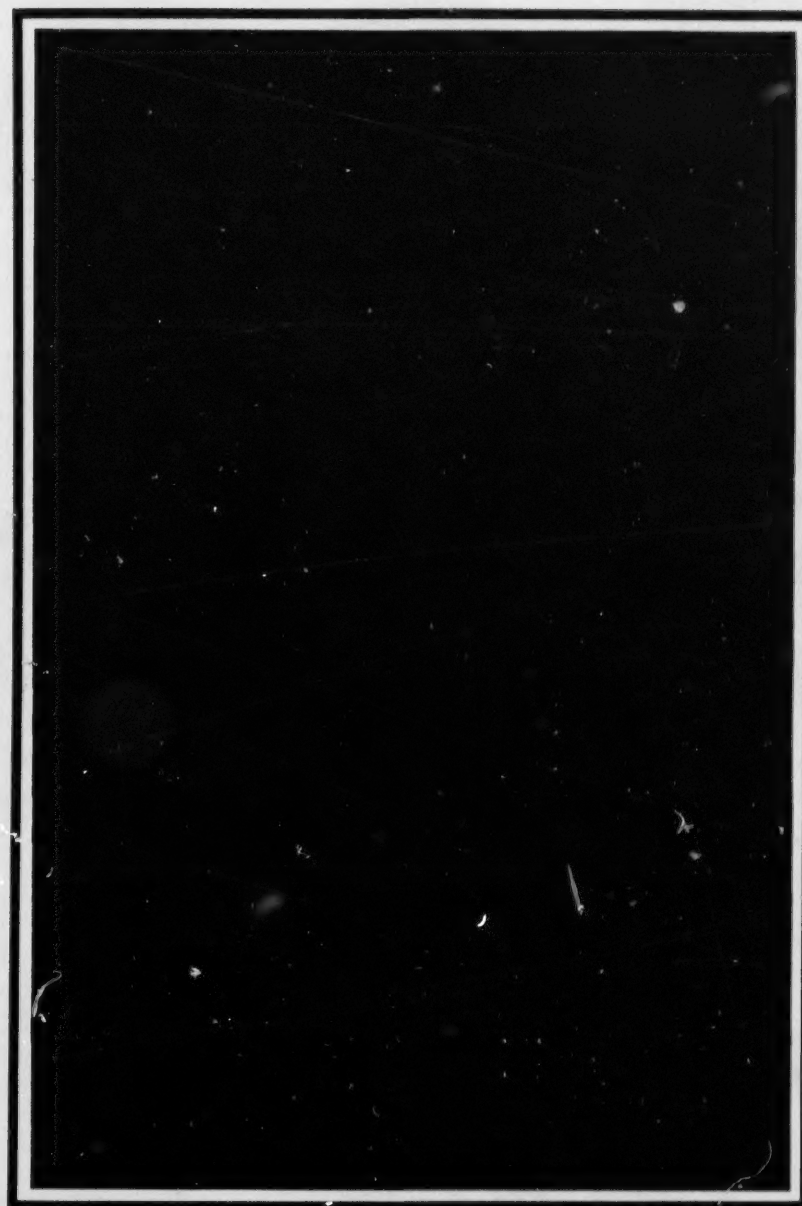


PHOTO: MHS, Eugene Becker

great skill in teaching the young. They taught every child whatever he would need to know in order to live, and they did so with almost no punishment. The best school of today could do no better.

For the Ojibwe boy of long ago, one of the most important skills was to learn how to use the bow and arrow. When he was only a few years old, his father or grandfather made him a small bow and taught him how to shoot. The boy carried the weapon with him everywhere, and the twang of the bowstring was heard from morning until night. The boy looked on this as play, but he was really learning his life work. Before long he was trying to shoot squirrels and other small animals. When he proudly brought home the first game he had killed — even if it was only a tiny bird — his parents made a feast in his honor and gave thanks to the Great Spirit for his success. In that way they taught him how important the hunter was. Later, when he killed his first big game, such as a deer or a bear, they honored him with another feast.

As the boy grew, he used larger bows and arrows, and he also learned how to make them. By the time he was nine or ten, he was a good shot. Except on war parties, or on hunting trips that would be too long for him, a boy of that age went everywhere with his father.

Every man taught his sons how to track game, where to find each kind of animal, how to skin game and prepare the meat for carrying home. In short, the father taught the boy everything he needed to know as a hunter and a warrior.

At the same time, Ojibwe girls learned the things they would need to know when they were grown up. Each girl's mother or some other older relative made dolls for her out of leather, stuffed with moss, or from pine needles or corn-husks. The girl learned how to make clothes for the dolls, like her own clothes, and to decorate the dresses and moc-casins with bead embroidery and other decoration. Her mother taught her how to make a tiny wigwam, just like the big one in which the family lived. While teaching her, her mother might say, "You must learn how to make a good wigwam. Otherwise, when you grow up you will have to live outdoors, and people will laugh at you."

As she grew, the girl worked alongside her mother and grandmother every day. In that way she learned to tan hides, weave mats, make maple sugar, and harvest rice, to help make and paddle the canoe, and many other skills.

No Ojibwe boy or girl ever asked, "Why do I have to learn this or that?" The children saw the work being done by the grownups, and they knew they would have to learn it if they were to live.

LIFE IN THE WINTER

For the Ojibwe people of long ago, each part of the year brought its own tasks, its own way of life. Each season told them where to place their wigwams and light the lodge fires.

In winter each family group lived alone, deep in the evergreen forest. Their little cluster of lodges stood in the shelter of the pines and spruces.

The winter home was the wigwam — the kind of house in which the Ojibwe lived during much of the year. It was a rounded framework made of poles or saplings stuck firmly in the ground and covered with sheets of birch bark and mats woven of bark strips and reeds. The door was formed by a heavy skin hung over an opening in one side. The fire, in the center, sent its smoke through a hole that was left in the roof. They placed a circle of stones and pieces of log around the fire. Stones took up the heat and helped to keep the lodge warm. In winter, the wigwam was snugly chinked with moss and banked outside with snow and cedar boughs to keep out the cold wind.

Around the fire, where people sat, worked, slept, and ate, the ground was covered with a thick layer of fragrant spruce boughs, over which were laid the soft furs of bear, moose, or other animals. The fire was kept alive through the night while the family slept, wrapped in furs, with their feet toward the hot stones.

It was the custom, during the winter, for the Ojibwe man to hunt in a large stretch of woods where only he and men of his family could take game. This meant that all winter each family group lived many miles away from every other. The right to hunt in a certain part of the forest was handed down from father to son. This custom arose, because there was not enough game in any one place to feed more than a small number. For this reason, too, no man ever hunted on another man's land unless he was invited.

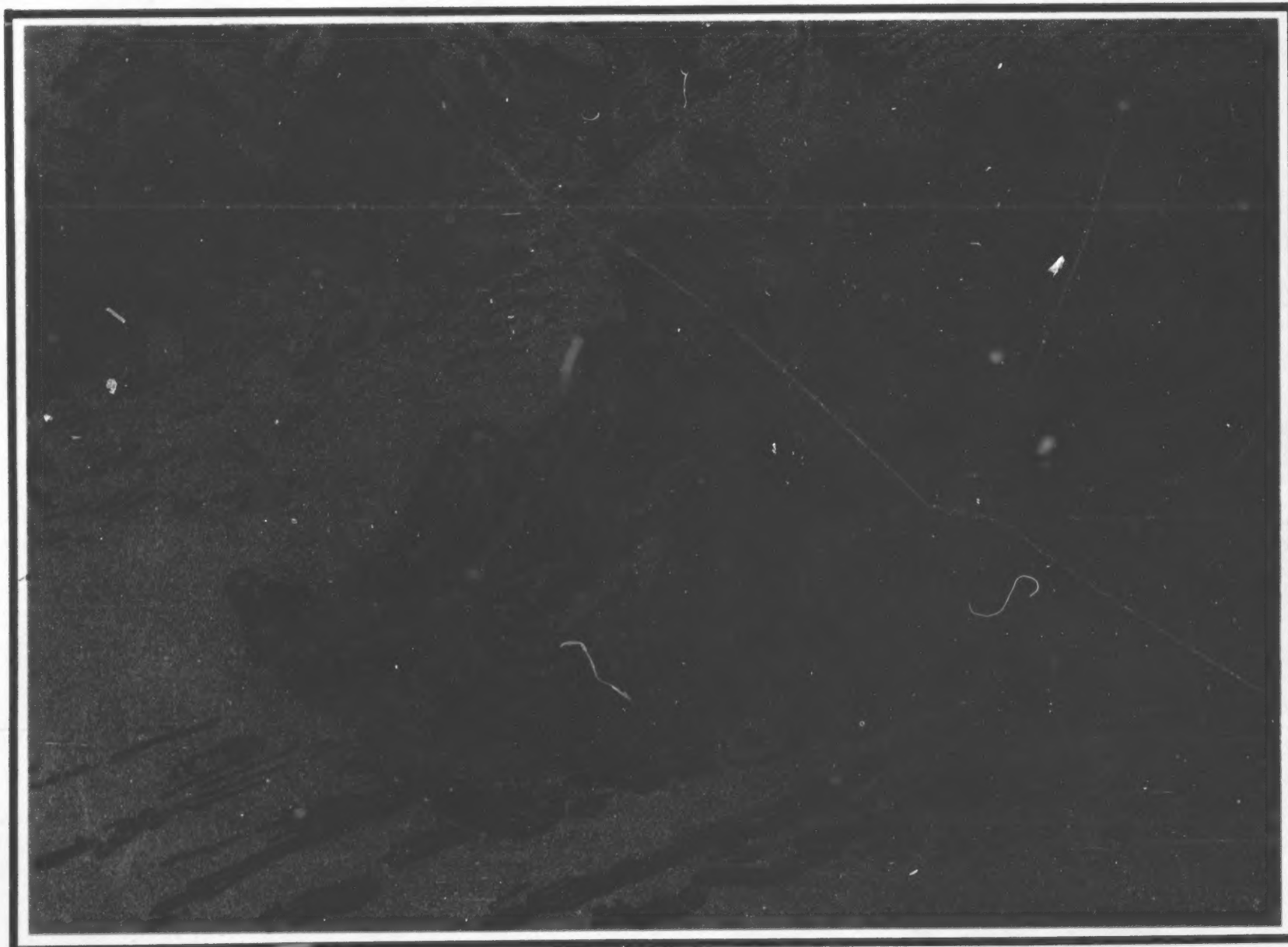
The father of the family went out to hunt moose, deer, elk, or whatever could be found. When there was snow on the ground, he traveled on snowshoes. He never spared himself to provide for his children and others who depended on him. Even the coldest weather did not keep him at home. Sometimes he had to stay away for days at a time. Then he slept in the forest under a shelter made of spruce boughs, or rolled himself in his fur robe and lay down beside a small fire. Older and younger men in the family — young sons, an older uncle, a grandfather — might make shorter hunting trips, to snare rabbits, squirrels, partridge, or other small game. But the father was the main provider.

All too often the hunter came home in winter, after many days, bringing no game. This was the great fear of the Ojibwe people, for winter was the hungry time. If the father came home empty-handed, there was no scolding in the lodge, no unkind word. All knew that if he brought no game it was because he could find none.

If good luck followed the hunter and he brought home more than the family could eat, the mother and other women cut the extra meat into strips and dried it on a rack set over a low outdoor fire. This fire also served other purposes. When the weather was not cold, the women cooked food there. Often when men and boys returned from hunting they would lift the rack off and stand around the fire to dry their clothes. Or they might sit beside the blaze, talking and smoking.

Hunters stayed at home if the snow was very deep. Then they used their time to make or repair bows, arrows, and traps, to make snowshoes, or simply to rest.

The women and girls also had their winter tasks. Using the hides they had tanned during the summer, they made jackets, leggings, moccasins, and other clothes for the family, decorating them with beautiful flower designs done with



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ART: CARL GAWBOY

beads and with dyed porcupine quills. There were always clothes of the hunters to be mended. When the snow was not too deep, the women worked outdoors, preparing the skins of animals which the men brought in. The grandmother wove fish nets and hunting bags, made twine, helped with the cooking, brought in firewood, and took care of the young children.

When boys and girls were not helping their elders, they had many ways to amuse themselves in winter. They slid down hills on toboggans or on large pieces of bark, and held snowshoe races and snowball battles. A favorite winter pastime was snow snake. In this game, players slid smooth, flattened poles over the snow to see whose pole or snow snake would slide the farthest. This game was also played by grownups.

12 The children, especially, enjoyed the winter evenings, when they sat on furs by the lodge fire and listened to one

of their grandparents or uncles tell legends. Some grandfathers could tell stories every evening for many weeks, even months, yet never tell the same one twice.

Legends were told in fall, winter, and spring. In summer, it was believed, the spirits of plants and animals might listen and be displeased. Some of the legends were sad and made the children weep; some were funny. Others were so scary and mysterious that they made the little ones afraid of the black shadows dancing on the lodge wall behind them. There were exciting tales, too.

Favorite legends were those which told about the deeds and adventures of Winabojo (WIN-a-bo-ZHOO) who was also called Manabozho and Nenabozho. He was a mythical being who stood for all life — human, animal, and plant. Many stories told how he overcame illness or hunger by his cleverness and skill. The Ojibwe people believed that the good things in life — such as wild rice, fire, plants to heal diseases — came to them through Winabojo.

Stories were told to children for entertainment, but also to teach them. There were tales about the creation of the world and of man, and others which taught facts which they should know about their life in the forest. Some told of the deeds of great hunters and warriors, and of the customs of the people. Some stories taught boys and girls how they should behave and what attitude they should have in certain situations. Night after night the children listened beside the fire in the cozy wigwam while, outside, the snow fell silently and the cold wind moaned. In later years, many people had happy memories of those hours of childhood.

Thus the weeks and months of winter passed. By late February or early March, when the days had grown longer, the family began to look forward to spring. The father might remark, "The weeks are passing, and it is time we got started on our spring work." Everyone watched eagerly for the first crow, which was looked on as a sure sign that warmer days were soon coming.



PHOTO: MHS

LIFE IN THE SPRING

The snow was still on the ground when the family broke camp. They packed all their belongings on sleds or on toboggans and departed, leaving the woods for the open country of waterways and of leaf trees, still bare. Traveling short distances each day, they headed for the maple grove — the sugar bush — as they did each year when spring drew near. It was a journey of many days, but on the way they stopped at places where the father, if necessary, could shoot ducks and other fowl that were flying north. At that time of year there was little or no food left from the harvest of the year before, and the family must live on what the father brought from the hunt each day.

Even before they reached their destination, the family met friends and relatives who had wintered in other parts of the forest, and were also on their way to the maple grove. The families had not seen each other since the autumn before. And so it was a time for greeting, a time to ask after everyone's health, to exclaim at how the children had grown, and to exchange stories of what had happened during the winter past.

In the sugar bush, each family had its own part of the grove, the same part each year, where the members lived and where they tapped trees for the sweet sap. The sap had not yet begun to rise in the maples by the time they arrived, but there was much work to be done. First they must set up the family lodge and get settled. This work was done by the women. The lodges in the grove were close enough together so that the families could visit with each other easily.

The Ojibwe families carried nearly all their belongings with them when they moved. But since they returned to the same area for the same season every year, they could leave some things behind at each place. The pole frame of the wigwam was often left standing and needed only to be covered with the bark sheets and woven mats which were brought along.

Extra food was also left behind at the camps to which the people returned, such as at the sugar bush. The food was stored in deep pits lined with wild hay and bark and carefully covered with hay, earth, and logs. Dried meat and fish wrapped in bark, sacks of rice, and dried berries sewn up into birch bark containers or makaks would keep for many months in such a pit. When the family returned to the maple grove each spring, the grandmother opened the food pit and brought out many good things to eat.

As before, the father went out on the hunt to get food. This was the time of year when the men spread nets to catch flocks of wild pigeons. Early spring was the best time to trap the otter, mink, and beaver, for then their fur was thickest and glossiest. Before the lakes and rivers melted, the men speared fish through holes in the ice. After the ice melted was a good time to bring in large amounts of fish with nets. Meat and fish not eaten at once were dried over the fire for later use.

Since in spring the bark of the birch tree was strongest and could best be stripped from the trunk, this was the time to make canoes. As soon as the ice melted, the men would need canoes to go hunting. And later the families needed them to move on to their summer villages.

The canoe was a light, strong frame made of cedar, covered with birch bark, which was sewed on with twine made of spruce roots. The seams in the bark were sealed with spruce gum. Some of the work of canoe making was done by women; some parts were done by men. In every band there were older men and women who were especially

skilled in canoe building. They were helped by younger members who learned the craft from them. The canoe of the Ojibwe was a remarkable piece of work. It was perfectly balanced, waterproof, strong enough to hold a very heavy load, yet light enough to be carried. Besides, it was an object of graceful beauty. Of course, every Ojibwe man and woman had to be skilled at handling the canoe.

While some were hunting, and some were building canoes, others began the work of sugar making. The mother of the family opened the sugarhouse, where the sap was boiled down into sugar in big clay pots or in iron kettles. The sugarhouse was not rounded like the wigwam. It was a frame of poles covered with bark, but it had a gabled roof, like most houses we see today. It was often the grandmother who opened the storage hut where the family kept hundreds of little birch bark troughs in which the sap was collected. She went into the forest to find birch trees and strip off pieces of bark from which she made more troughs and also makaks in which to store the sugar.

Sugar making was hard work, and lasted from four to six weeks. First the women went through the grove and tapped each tree. This meant that they made a gash in the trunk and stuck a little wooden spout into the cut. Soon the sap began to drip from the spout into the bark trough which was set under each spout.

Then, from morning until night, boys and girls ran back and forth, emptying the sap troughs into large containers in the sugarhouse. They also had to cut wood and bring it in, to keep the fires going under the kettles. But they knew there would be a reward. When the sap began to boil down into sugar, they were given all the sugar candy they wanted to eat. Often they ate it out of large clam shells which they picked up on the lake shore. Or the women packed it into little cones for them, made of bark. The grownups enjoyed eating the sugar, too. But the grandmother filled many makaks with sugar to use during the rest of the year.

LIFE IN THE SUMMER

When the sugar making was ended, the snow had melted and spring rains pattered on the lodge roof. The leaves were beginning to unfold in the forest home of the Ojibwe, and the ground was carpeted with flowers. Now it was time to think of planting gardens — the next season's task.

For this work, the Ojibwe traveled to their summer village sites, for during the warm months they lived together in small villages. With a skill which they learned from long experience, they wrapped the dried meat and fish in pieces of bark, tied the furs and hides into packs, rolled up the mats and bark sheets that covered their lodges, and packed all into the canoes. If it had been a good season, there were many makaks filled with maple sugar to take along.

One grownup usually sat in the prow (front) of each canoe, another in the stern (back). The children and dogs were often set among bundles in the middle. Then the paddlers dipped their paddles into the clear waters and the family started off, for summer was coming. The travelers stopped at many places along the way to hunt and fish and to gather birch bark and marsh reeds, for weaving mats and for other purposes.

After many days of travel they drew up to shore at the place where they would spend the summer. Again the women prepared the houses and moved in the family belongings. In summer most of the families lived in bark-covered houses that were built like the sugarhouse in the maple grove. Such houses had a low platform along each side, which would be covered with woven mats, on which people sat, ate, and slept.

After each woman had arranged a comfortable, pleasant home for her family, she prepared to plant her garden. This meant that she must open the food pit where she had stored seed corn, and pumpkin and squash seeds the autumn before. Corn was the most important crop planted. Some of the women also planted potatoes, although wild potatoes grew in many regions where the Ojibwe lived.

Their forest home provided the Ojibwe with many kinds of wild foods, but it was especially rich in fruits. In early summer came the fragrant strawberries, which grew in great patches of pink. As the season wore on, other fruits ripened: juneberries, raspberries, blackberries, cherries, grapes, cranberries, and blueberries. All were juicy and delicious. The women knew where each kind grew and when it would ripen. It was work to pick the berries, but it was enjoyable, too. Some of the fruits were eaten fresh; the rest were dried and packed away for future use.

Summer was one season in which the Ojibwe people could enjoy some leisure. The days were long; the sun was warm, and there was plenty to eat. It was a time for visiting friends, and holding religious and ceremonial feasts and dances.

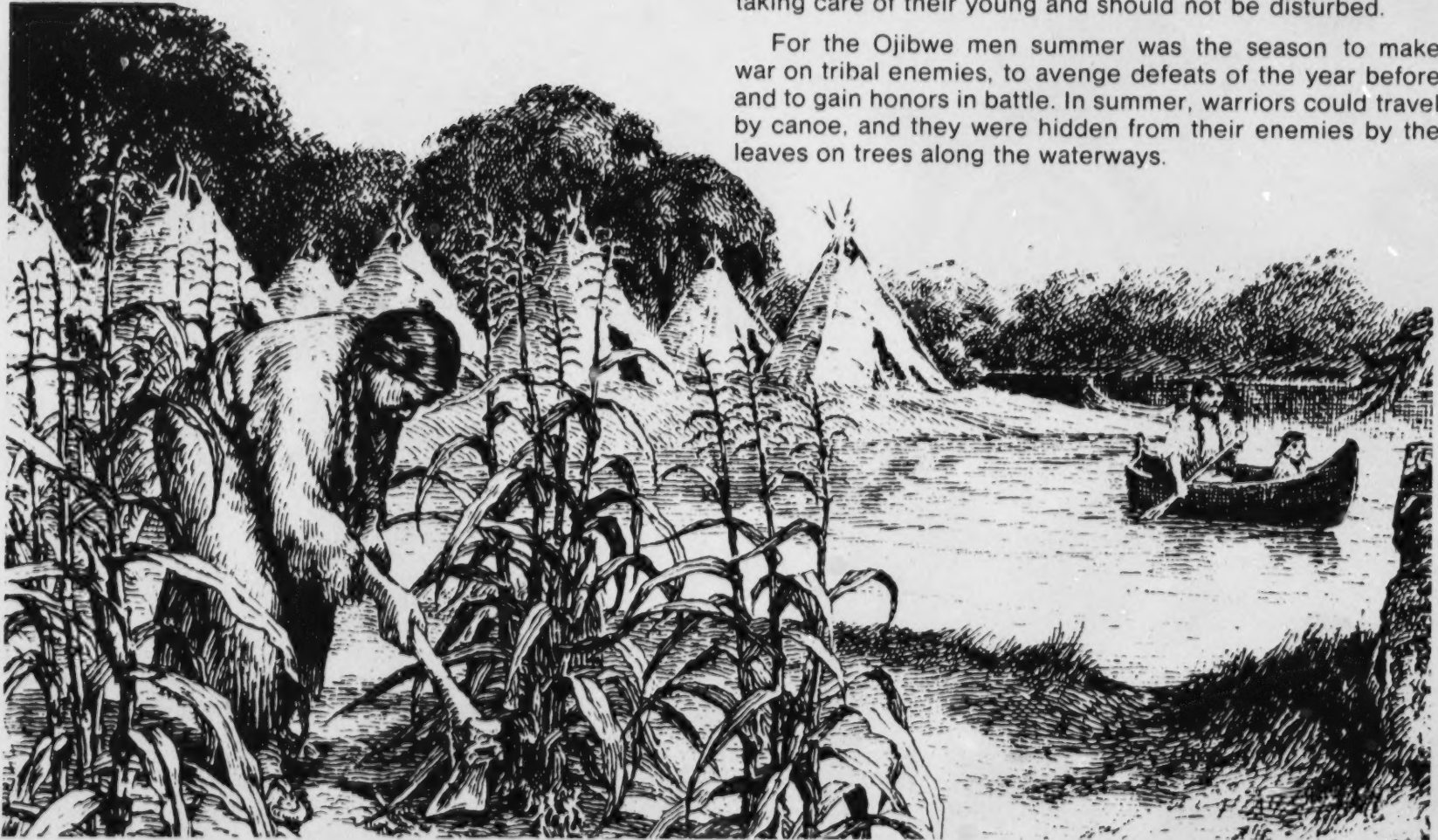
Summer was also the time to play games in which many took part and for which large, open playing fields were needed. A popular sport among the Ojibwe was the famous game of lacrosse. It was played with a ball about the size of a baseball, made of leather stuffed with hair. The field had goal posts at each end and might be a quarter of a mile long or longer. Each player had a lacrosse stick or racket, about four feet long. At one end the wood was curved to form a circle, which was filled with a net pouch. The game was played between teams which had from five to a hundred or more players. A contest might last for an afternoon, or all day. Or it might be continued for several days. Villages played against each other, also tribes. Women's teams often played. Large crowds of spectators gathered, to cheer their team and to bet on the outcome of the game. Lacrosse was also played in winter if the people could find a smooth, open place, such as a frozen lake, for they loved so much to play.

Summer was a time for foot races, wrestling, jumping, shooting matches, and other contests. They were mostly carried on by the men and boys, who were almost all excellent athletes. Because boys practiced testing their accuracy,

strength, endurance, and skill almost every day, by the time they were grown up, most of them were experts in many athletic arts.

The men did not hunt much in summer. The pelts of the fur-bearing animals were not good at that time of year. Animals could not be tracked so easily in summer as when there was snow on the ground. The mother elk and deer were taking care of their young and should not be disturbed.

For the Ojibwe men summer was the season to make war on tribal enemies, to avenge defeats of the year before and to gain honors in battle. In summer, warriors could travel by canoe, and they were hidden from their enemies by the leaves on trees along the waterways.



FREDERICK N. WILSON

THE RICE HARVEST

When autumn approached, new tasks awaited the Ojibwe people. The most important work of the autumn was harvesting the rice crop. For that, the families traveled by canoe to the rice lakes and marshes.

Once arrived, they set up camp on the shores and settled down for a stay of several weeks. Since the family returned to the same spot each fall, they left the pole frame of their wigwam standing. It might need a bit of repair, but then the mats and birch bark rolls which they brought along could be laid over it and fastened down, and the lodge was ready for them to move in. The rice fields were so large that many families camped together on shore, even though each had its own part of the marsh to harvest.

The rice of the Ojibwe grew wild in shallow lakes, and in quiet waters along streams. By mid-summer, the rice stalks stood more than five feet above the water. Some weeks before the harvest, some of the women made a trip to the rice fields and tied up some of the grain heads into bunches. This was done to show what part of the field would be harvested. It was also done so that an unexpected wind would not scatter the kernels and so that the wild birds could not eat more than their share of the crop.

The grain was harvested from canoes, since the rice grew in water. One person standing in the canoe would push the craft through the watery field, using a long pole. Another harvester — usually a woman — sat holding a long stick of wood in each hand. With one stick she bent the tall stalks over the canoe. With the other, she tapped the grain heads, and the rice rained out.

After some hours, the fresh-smelling grain heaped up in the bottom of the boat, covering the harvesters almost to the knees. Then it was time to go to shore and unload.

Before the rice was ready to be stored it had to be dried in the sun on big sheets of bark, then parched — a small

amount at a time — to crack the hulls. To knock off the hulls, a man tramped the rice in a hole lined with hide. The grain was then poured onto large trays. The trays were shaken and the rice tossed up lightly so that the wind could blow away the hulls. These steps in harvesting might be done several times, until at last the clean kernels remained.

All day long, the work went on. Harvesting rice took the full time of several members of the family. But there were other tasks in the rice camp as well, such as fishing and berry picking. Late chokecherries and early cranberries were ripe at the time of the rice harvest, and it was necessary to pick all that could be found. The berries were eaten fresh every day, but the rest were dried and packed into bags or makaks to be used in the winter. Sometimes the berries were pounded and then pressed into little cakes for storage.

The men spent a great deal of time hunting. Fall was the season to shoot ducks and geese, when thousands of birds flocked to the rice marshes to feast on the ripening grain.

In fall, as much food as possible had to be gathered and stored away for the long winter ahead. Some of it was put into the pits at each season's camping site. The rest was taken along to the winter home.

When the rice harvest was ended, it was time for another seasonal move. After closing the rice lodge and leaving everything in order for the next harvest, the families loaded the sacks of grain into their canoes and set off to journey back to their summer village.

There the women reaped the corn and vegetables in their gardens. They also filled the pits with food, not forgetting to store away seed for the next spring's planting.

At that time some people of the village might make a trip to the maple grove with bags and packages of food to store in the pits there.

As the cold weather approached, the people broke camp and separated. One by one the families departed for their

winter homes. As much food as possible was taken along, for the winter was long and the hunter was not always successful. On the way into the pine forest, there was more hunting and fishing, for the waters were still open, and wild fowl were flying south.

By the time the northern days had grown cold and darkness came early, the family had reached their winter hunting grounds. Once more the lodges had to be set up and prepared for winter. The circle of the year was full.

THE RELIGION OF THE OJIBWE

Through all their seasonal tasks, the Ojibwe remembered the Great Spirit, for they were a deeply religious people. The first fruits of every season — whether fish, maple sugar, fruits from the forest or garden, or game from the hunt — were offered to the Gichimanido, with thanksgiving and a prayer that the season would bring enough so that the people would not starve. Prayers were offered at many other times of life as well — when the rice harvest began, when the gardens were planted, when sickness visited the lodge. Prayer was often said before a meal. One traveler told of being invited to eat in an Ojibwe lodge. Before the meal began, the host "uttered a prayer, in which he thanked the Giver of all good gifts for placing him in a position to feed the hungry, and asked a grace upon the meal."

Much of the religion of the Ojibwe was a private matter — each one's relation with his personal guardian spirit — which was part of his thinking every day of life. Each Ojibwe also felt aware of good and evil spirits which, he believed, lived in the trees, animals, clouds, thunder, and in everything around him.

But the Ojibwe expressed his need for help from the Gichimanido in other ways. The main way was in the religious society called the Midewiwin (mee-DAY-wee-win) or Mide (mee-DAY). Tradition taught him that the Mide was given to the Ojibwe by the Gichimanido as a help against the troubles of life.

Both men and women joined the Mide, but joining was not easy. A person first had to be accepted as a candidate, and make a long preparation before the joining ceremonies could take place. The rites, which lasted several days, were held in a large bark structure — the Mide lodge, built especially for that purpose. There were many parts to the ceremonies, such as religious chants and drumming, and a ritual by which the new member gained "spirit power."

Those joining the Mide had many things to learn. They must know the sacred herbs and how they were used to cure diseases. They had to memorize the chants and religious dances. They must understand the teachings of the Mide, which told the members how they should live and act. This information was written down, in picture writing, on long rolls of birch bark. These scrolls of sacred writings were kept by head men of the Mide.

The religious teachings of the Ojibwe may be compared to the Commandments of the Hebrews. (Some of the teachings are given on page 19.) Members were expected to follow the rules, and they mostly did so. All the Ojibwe did not join the Mide society, but all benefited from the healing power and goodness of the Mide members.

The life of the Ojibwe in the forests and beside the waters was an orderly cycle year after year — from the deep winter woods, to springtime in the maple grove, on to the open village site by the summer gardens, then to the harvest camp beside the rice lakes, and back again to the winter lodge under the pines. Each year the same, as season followed season.

The Ojibwe took of the fruits and animals of the forest as much as they needed, but no more. They respected the woodland. Wherever they built their wigwams and lighted the lodge fires, they left the place as fruitful as it was before. Thus they lived, generation after generation, in the woodlands.

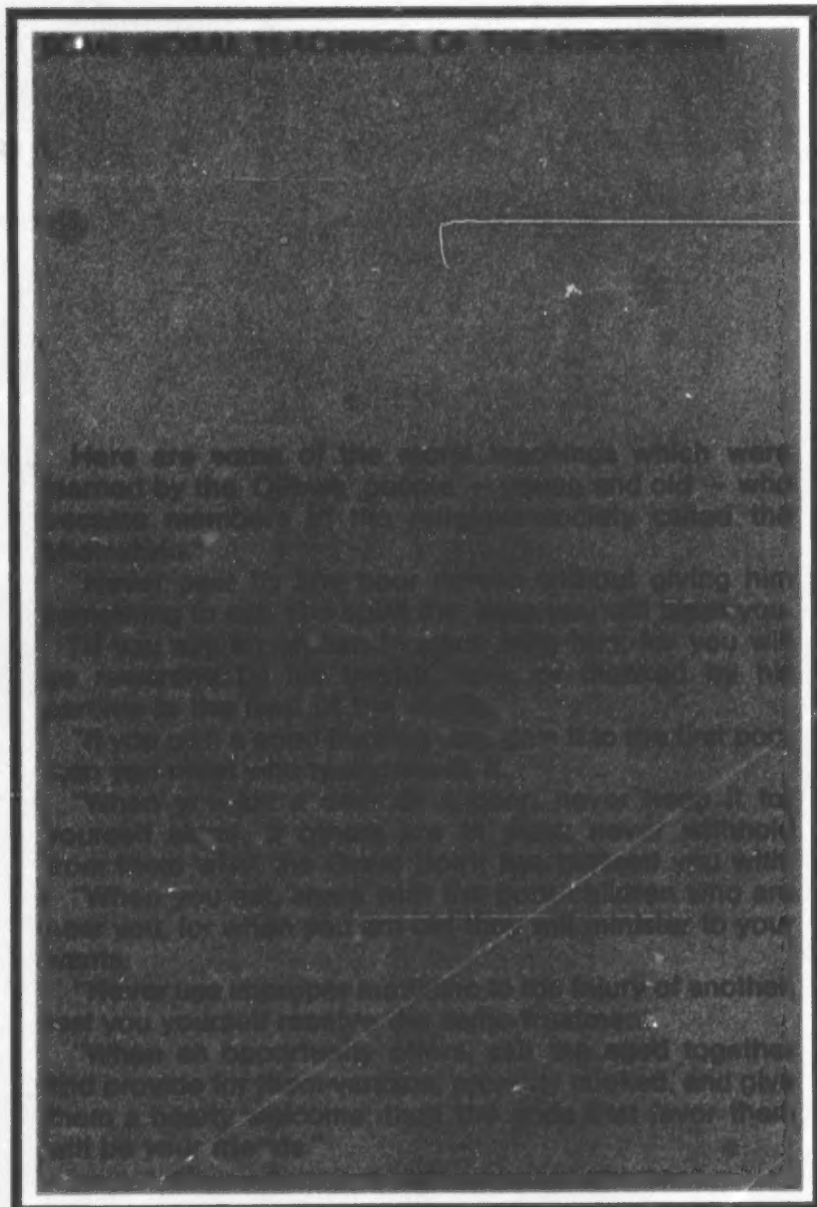


PHOTO: SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION



*Life, History, and Travels of Kah-Ge-Ga-Gah-Bowh (George Copway), by George Copway, page 40.